

Massage Therapy Guidelines For Hospital And Home Care

By Tedi Dunn and Marian Williams. Information for People, Inc. 4th edition, 2001
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Reviewed by Lisa Mertz

Massage Therapy Guidelines for Hospital and Home Care is an expanded edition of the original manual provided to Planetree hospitals for the past 10 years. Tedi Dunn, a massage therapist and social worker, developed and implemented the first massage programs for Planetree, and Marian Williams, a massage therapist and registered nurse, established the Massage Therapy Internship Program. Massage has been an integral part of the Planetree model of patient-centered care since its founding.

A patient, Angelica Thieriot, founded Planetree in 1978. After undergoing several traumatic hospital experiences, she approached the chief of medicine to discuss her vision of a hospital where patients could find support and healing on all levels. A planning and advisory board was formed by 1985 under her direction to create the first Planetree unit, a 13-bed medical/surgical unit in the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco.

The name came from the image of Hippocrates sitting under the planetree, or sycamore, teaching his medical students to make their patients the focus of care, and emphasizing the importance of environment in healing.

Planetree, now a subsidiary of Griffin Health Services Corporation, has become a patient-centered, community –based network of 40 health-care settings throughout the United States and Canada. These settings range from small rural hospitals with 29 beds to large urban medical centers with 1300 beds. They include acute and critical care, emergency departments, long-term care, outpatient services, ambulatory care and community health centers.

In the foreword to Massage Therapy Guidelines for Hospital and Home Care, Laura Gilpin, director of Planetree Alliance, wrote, “We are committed to the vision that one day massage will be seen as vital to health-care as are lab work, X-rays and medications. (p. v).

Drawing on the experience of other pioneers in the field of hospital-based massage, Dunn and Williams have compiled a series of essays and articles based on the guidelines they used for training volunteers and interns in hospital-based massage. They quote Karen Gibson from her 1997 book, *Developing a Hospital-Based Massage Therapy Program*, defining hospital-based massage therapy (HBMT) as:

“...the application of skilled, sensitive and compassionate touch, by professionally trained massage therapists in medical environments with the specific intention of promoting the healing process, improving clinical outcomes, and encouraging higher levels of wellness both in patients and those who care about them. HBMT refers to practice in any medical related setting...” (p. 2).

The authors point out that since many practitioners enter the massage profession to get away from the fast-paced, high-tech corporate world, they are dismayed to encounter the world of patient care, “complete with internal politics, hazardous waste and lots of technology” (p. 4). Although it is challenging for massage therapists to maintain their calm presence in the midst of that often tumultuous flow, the authors attest that it can be done, and find that hospital care is all the better for it.

Guidelines offers resource to promote the knowledge and skill required to maintain the level of confidence that will allow practitioners to maintain that calm presence in the midst of the busy hospital day. The book lacks an overall table of contents and index, but Chapter 2 presents practical information organized as a checklist to make topics easy to find. Topics include how to introduce yourself to the staff, review written orders and precautions, create a healing environment for patients, document treatment sessions and maintain professionalism. The chapter includes excerpts from Sharon Burch's book *Recognizing Health and Illness*, on communicable disease and bodywork for people who have terminal illness; and article by Irene Smith on bodywork for people who are HIV-infected; and an excerpt from Gayle MacDonald's book *Medicine Hands*, on massage for people with cancer.

Chapter 3 discusses how to develop a hospital-based massage program, and provides examples of proposals, contracts and program manuals from the pioneering women in this field: Laura Koch, Karen Gibson, Susie Ogg Cormier, Irene Smith, Dawn Nelson, Joy Metcalf and Xerlan Geiser. The final chapter provides an overview of Planetree Massage Therapy Program and Internship Program including examples of the various documents needed for each component of such a program.

This book is an invaluable resource for any massage therapist or hospital administrator embarking on the awesome journey into hospital-based massage. Dunn, Williams and the Planetree Alliance, along with the gathering of women whose work is so open-handedly offered here, are serving the massage community in a vital way through the resources represented in this book.

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